

Coordination and facilitation of innovation platforms

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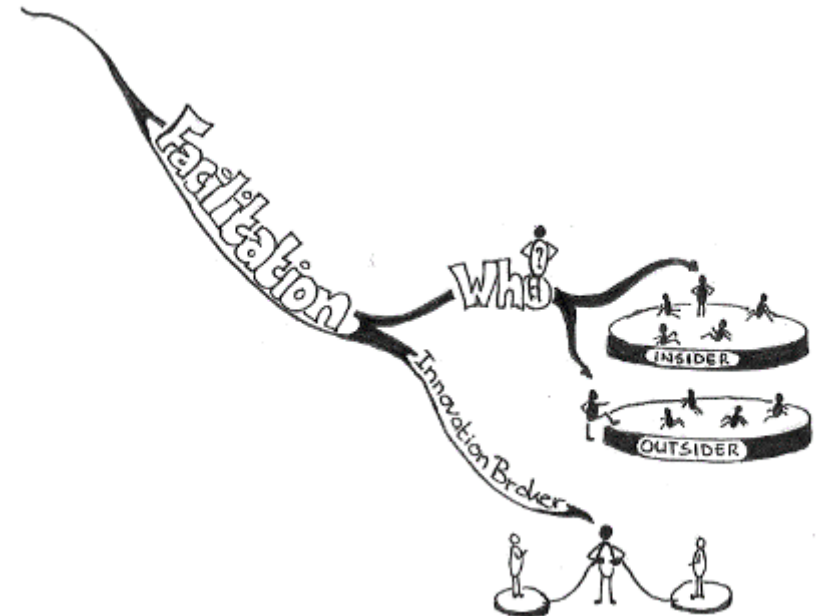
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For quality of life



Objectives of the module

The main aims of the module are:

- To provide an overview about the process of facilitation and coordination in innovation platforms
- To explore the role of the innovation broker in the facilitation of innovation platforms



Facilitation and coordination in innovation platforms

- Facilitation of innovation is a flexible and adaptive process during which facilitator(s) manage dialogue and stimulate collective problem analysis by multiple stakeholders to overcome challenges or make use of opportunities.
- To bring about lasting and positive change, an innovation platform needs to address issues on and off the farm. Each issue may involve a different set of stakeholders.

(Source: ILRI, 2013)



Facilitation and coordination in innovation platforms (cont)

- It is necessary to influence not only the way farmers think and make decisions, but how other stakeholders behave too.
- These stakeholders do not naturally want to cooperate or share information. They may have divergent interests, or even compete with each other. Skillful facilitation is needed so they agree on common goals and activities.
- These system-level changes need careful facilitation

(Source: ILRI, 2013)



The Role of Innovation brokers in coordination and facilitation of innovation



- Innovation brokers” are persons or organizations that, from a relatively impartial third-party position, purposefully catalyze innovation through bringing together actors and facilitating their interaction.
- A platform innovation broker is responsible for connecting the local and higher levels and for providing guidance for a period before leaving these roles to the local stakeholders.
- Innovation brokers act as “systemic intermediaries” in innovation systems, forging many-to-many relationships
(Source: *Klerkx, 2014*)

Why do we need innovation brokers

- Creating and fostering effective coalitions among actors is often hindered by incomplete information about what potential partners can offer.
- Efforts to overcome the many barriers to effective communication, cooperation, and ultimately innovation are thus central to the public interest and justify public investments.
- It is important to have people who act as brokers in networks, connecting stakeholders that are not familiar with each other but may provide the “new combinations” essential to innovation.
- Innovation brokers are facilitators of interaction and cooperation in innovation systems, and their activities extend throughout innovation processes

(Source: Klerkx, 2014)

Benefits of Innovation brokers

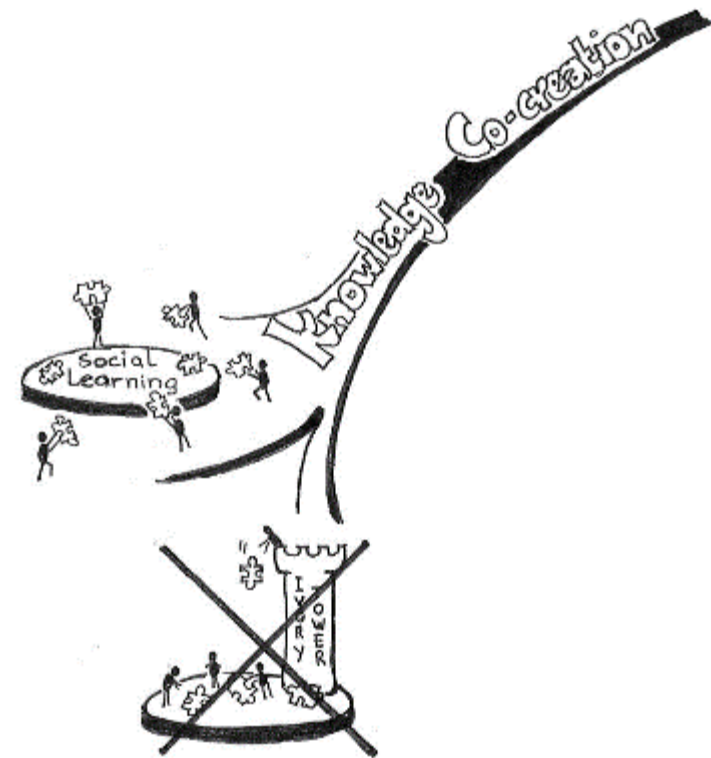
- Innovation brokering, communication between the multiple actors can improve greatly
- By providing fresh insights and a mirror for self-reflection, innovation brokers stimulate clients to look beyond their current situation and constraints
- Innovation brokering should improve how the overall innovation system functions leading to a better-functioning innovation system

(Source: Gildemacher, 2014)



Functions of Innovation broking

- **Analyzing the context and articulating demand:-** The participatory assessment of problems and opportunities through quick system diagnosis
- **Composing networks:-** Facilitate linkages among relevant actors.
- **Facilitating interaction:-** Action planning, along with the identification of and support to those taking leadership in multistakeholder activities, has the main objective of building functioning stakeholder coalitions



Facilitation in innovation platform

- An understanding among the platform participants with regard to the mandate and tasks of the broker/initiator/leader providing the main facilitation services is essential.
- The Innovation platform is normally started by an initiator, innovation broker or leader who is described as that “person or organization that brings together and mediates between stakeholders
- After an IP is initiated, other individuals / actors whose roles are critical are incorporated and these include facilitators (connectors) and champions (specialists).

(Source: ILRI, 2013)

Facilitation in innovation platform (cont)

- A facilitator is required to ensure that the IP remains operationally alive.
- He/she should be transparently elected, preferably democratically or by consensus and should remain a neutral actor who builds consensus especially where agreement is elusive
- S/he ensures clarity of roles, responsibilities and benefits for the actors as well as managing the evolution of roles.
- The facilitator should also be good at networking

Principles that govern facilitation and coordination of Innovation platforms

For facilitation of Innovation platforms the following principles can help:

- 1. Building on existing structures and activities:** Assess to what extent existing activities and forums at the local level can be used as a starting point of the innovation platform
- 2. A participatory approach and local ownership:** Local ownership is one of main factors that should determine the success and sustainability of innovation platform.
- 3. Developing capacity for facilitating IP formation and functioning:** Forming and facilitating the IPs require intensive and skilled facilitation and brokering by the process facilitators, and involves training and personal coaching.

Principles that govern facilitation and coordination of Innovation platforms (cont)

4. Monitoring and evaluation of Innovation platforms:-

Monitoring and evaluation of IPs is a crucial element of the IP implementation process. It is critical to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of IPs as mechanisms to achieve the intended outcomes.

5. Communication between Innovation platforms:-

Linkages/mechanisms need to be established between IPs to enhance coordination, sharing and learning, and institutionalization.).

(Source: ILRI, 2013)

Main objectives of facilitation

- Develop individual and organizational capacities to be able to deal with dynamic challenges and opportunities
- Catalyze self organization and empowerment to enable articulation of needs
- Develop and spread technical and social innovations in a process of joint learning
- Link individuals and organizations to external service providers, markets sources of innovation in order to create functional innovation systems.

(Source: Tukahirwa, et al., 2013)



Characteristics and skills of a good facilitator

- Pose a relevant problem and encourage group discussion and analysis
- Provoke participants to think critically and motivate them towards action
- Listening and able to give feedback
- Understanding audience and group dynamics
- Have patience and good listening skills
- Self-awareness and openness to learn new skills
- Confidence without arrogance

(Source: Tukahirwa, et al., 2013)



Characteristics and skills of a good facilitator (cont)

- Respect opinion of others; not imposing ideas,
- Practice in creative and innovative thinking
- Ability to create an atmosphere of confidence among the participants
- Flexibility in changing methods and sequence; not always sticking to a pre-set sequence of techniques
- Knowledge of group development including the ability to sense a group's mood and change methods or adjust the programme on the spot
- Positive and consistent skills including writing and drawing illustrations
- Positive and consistent.

(Source: Tukahirwa, et al., 2013)

Role of researchers in the coordination and facilitation theme:

- The main question for researchers is if they should facilitate the platform – or not. If they do, researchers should address neutrality of the facilitation, and their own shifting role(s).
- researchers – as well as other stakeholders in the Innovation platforms – can also address the importance of knowledge co-creation with other stakeholders, and ensure tacit local knowledge is articulated and taken on board.
- Social learning is an important aspect of knowledge co-creation. Researchers can contribute to social learning by sharing information and (preliminary) research results in the platform
- Failures are important sources for learning. Researchers may need to play a leading role in supporting (self-) reflection among platform members, particularly in contexts where critical analysis is not the norm.

Key questions on coordination and facilitation theme:

1. Who facilitates the Innovation platform? an 'insider' or 'outsider'?
2. Can – or should – researchers facilitate the Innovation platform?
3. If researchers fulfil 'innovation broker' roles, are these sufficiently rewarded and recognized by research organizations?
4. Is local knowledge recognized within the platform as an important contributor to innovations?
5. What participatory methods are used to elicit local knowledge?
6. How does the platform support and enhance social learning among stakeholders?
7. How are failures dealt with within the platform?
8. How is reflection stimulated within the platform?



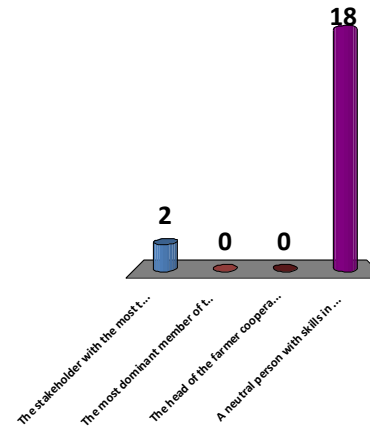
How will
you use this
in your
platform?

More information / resources on coordination and facilitation theme*

- ‘Operational field guide for developing and managing local agricultural innovation platforms’ (Makini et al. 2013)
- Putting heads together: Agricultural innovation platforms in practice (Nederlof et al. 2011)
- Multi-stakeholder Processes Resource Portal. Facilitation Skills (WUR CDI)
- The Brokering Guidebook (Tennyson 2003)
- Multi-Stakeholder Processes
- Multi-stakeholder Resource Portal. Participatory Learning and Action (PLA) (WUR CDI)
- ‘Participatory Learning and Action. A trainer’s guide’ (Pretty et al. 1995)
- ‘Learning alliances: an approach for building multi-stakeholder innovation systems’ (Lundy et al. 2005)

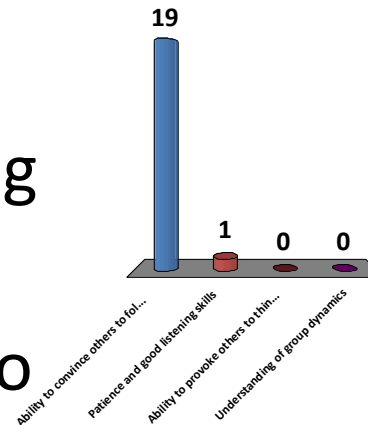
Which of the following people would you elect as an innovation broker for a new platform?

- A. The stakeholder with the most to gain from the successful functioning of the IP
- B. The most dominant member of the platform
- C. The head of the farmer cooperative
- D. A neutral person with skills in networking and building consensus



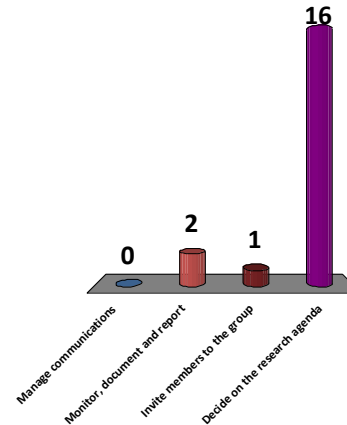
All of the following are desirable skills for a platform facilitator except one. **Select the undesirable skill.**

- A. Ability to convince others to follow his/her ideas
- B. Patience and good listening skills
- C. Ability to provoke others to think critically
- D. Understanding of group dynamics



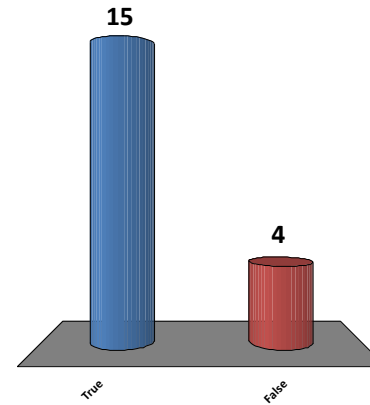
Which of the following is NOT a task that a facilitator would be likely to perform?

- A. Manage communications
- B. Monitor, document and report
- C. Invite members to the group
- D. Decide on the research agenda



A researcher can perform the role of innovation broker.
True or False?

- A. True
- B. False



More information

This module is associated with an elearning module on 'Understanding, Facilitating and Monitoring Agricultural Innovation Platforms' available at:

<http://learning.ilri.org/course/detail/24>

The course was inspired by a series of briefs available at:

<https://cgspace.cgiar.org/handle/10568/33667>

See especially: <http://hdl.handle.net/10568/34164>

Thank You

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